

### **REMARKS**

Claims 14-17, 23, and 25-29 are currently pending. Claims 14 and 23 have been amended. Claim 24 has been cancelled. Claims 27-30 have been added. Applicants respectfully assert that the claims are in condition for allowance.

### **Summary of the Office Action**

Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention. Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement.

Claims 14-16 and 23-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Coutelle et al. (638) in View of McCullough.

Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Coutelle et al (638) in view of McCullough and further in view of Guzi, Jr. et al. Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Hoover et al. (859) in view of Coutelle et al. (911) and further in view of Guzi, Jr. et al.

Claims 14-15 and 24-25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Hoover et al. (859) in view of Coutelle et al. (911).

### **Response to Office Action**

Applicants assert that it is well established that the prior art references when combined must teach or suggest all the claim limitations, *see, e.g.*, MPEP § 2142. Here, the references cited by the Examiner do not teach or suggest each and every element of the claims as amended.

Claims 14 and 23 have been amended to include a step of adjusting the pH of the clay slurry to above about 4.5. Since none of the references cited by the Examiner teach or suggest adjusting the pH of a clay slurry to above about 4.5, claims 14 and 23 are patentable over the cited references.

In order to expedite prosecution, Applicants have cancelled claim 24. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of the cancelled claim.

Dependent claims 15-17 and 25-29 depend directly from independent claims 14 or 23. Therefore, for the reasons noted above, claims 15-17 and 25-29 are allowable because they depend from an allowable base claim.

### CONCLUSION


In view of the foregoing remarks, it is submitted that pending claims 14-17, 23, and 25-30 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, timely allowance of claims 14-17, 23, and 25-30 are requested.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections based on 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) and 35 U.S.C. § 112 presented in the Office Action mailed June 21, 2006. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at 215-963-5067 to discuss any matter concerning this Application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized by this paper to charge any fees due in connection with the filing of the response to Deposit Account No. **50-0310**.

Respectfully submitted,

December 20, 2006  
Date

By:   
Louis W. Beardell, Jr.  
Reg. No. 40,506  
Dana Kolesar  
Reg. No. 55,338  
MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS, LLP  
1701 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2921  
Telephone: (215) 963-4764  
Facsimile: (215) 963-5001

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